

WISDOM'S GOLDENROD, JUNE FRITCHMAN SEMINAR NOTES
(TYPED)
JUNE 23, 1983
PLOTINUS; SOUL; OMNIPRESENCE

TOPIC: Plotinus

SUBJECT: Soul

SUBSUBJECT: Omnipresence

BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)
- Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*

PLOTINUS QUOTES READ OR REFERENCED: VI.4.1, VI.4.2, VI.4.14-15

TYPED by JF; REFORMATTED by IT 2024

NOTES:

- **RETYPE HANDWRITTEN NOTES (V08.1).** From 1983 0623 PLO OMNIPR F01.PDF (typed by an auditor) and JF Notes.
- Note from JF on the typing of her class notes: The reason I have chosen to type these is that this is important material, more discussion on VI.4 beyond that in the transcribed class. I also remember the 6/23/83 seminar as particularly numinous; it was partly held outdoors in the evening, with a crescent moon setting. That all the commentary is Anthony's cannot be 100% guaranteed (some might be from students). Quotes of VI.4.1, 2 added in entirety. Additional comments/corrections in [square brackets]. Some omissions, editing of punctuation, etc.
- In 2024, IT updates prefatory matter and footer, completes Book List, adds Plotinus quotes section, fixes typos, reformats to accord with new conventions.

1983 06/23 SEMINAR at Wisdom's Goldenrod Plotinus; Soul; Omnipresence

[File 1983 0623 PLO OMNIPR F01.PDF Begins]

[Note: The following few sentences are a summary of seminar 6/23/83 typed by an auditor (found among JF's papers).]

Anthony: 6-23-83

So life is the organ through which the Ideas are immediately apprehended.

Your life is the manifestation of the Ideas, your life is the canvas on which the Ideas are painted. Each *life* as life is one with Soul entire--is life essence. But each life is a distinctive manifestation of the Ideas.

[File 1983 0623 PLO OMNIPR F01.PDF Ends]

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[JF Notes Begin]

Plotinus VI.4.1: "How are we to explain the omnipresence of the Soul? Does it depend upon the definite magnitude of the material universe coupled with some native tendency in Soul to distribute itself over material mass, or is it a characteristic of Soul apart from body?

"In the latter case, Soul will not appear just where body may bring it; body will meet Soul awaiting it everywhere; wheresoever body finds place, there Soul lay before ever body was; the entire material mass of the universe has been set into an existent Soul.

"But if Soul spread thus wide before material extension existed, then as covering all space it would seem to be of itself a thing of magnitude, and in what mode could it exist in the All before the All was in being, before there was any All? And who can accept a Soul described as partless and massless and yet, for all that absence of extension, extending over a universe? We may perhaps be told that, though extended over the corporeal, it does not itself become so: but thus to give it magnitude as an accidental attribute leaves the problem still unsolved: precisely the same question must in all reason arise: How can the Soul take magnitude even in the mode of accident?

"We cannot think of Soul being diffused as a quality is, say sweetness or colour, for while these are actual states of the masses affected so that they show that quality at every point, none of them has an independent existence; they are attributes of body and known only as in body; such quality is necessarily of a definite extension. Further, the colour at any point is independent of that at any other; no doubt the Form, White, is the same all over, but there is not arithmetical identity; in Soul there is; it is one Soul in foot and in hand, as the facts of perception show. To speak generally, in the case of qualities the one is observably distributed part for part; in the Soul the identity is undistributed; what we sometimes call distribution is simply omnipresence.

"Obviously, we must take hold of the question from the very beginning in the hope of finding some clear and convincing theory as to how Soul, immaterial and without magnitude, can be thus broad-spread, whether before material masses exist or as enveloping them. Of course, should it appear that this omnipresence may occur apart from material things, there is no difficulty in accepting its occurrence

within the material.”

(See also Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*)

Discussed this evening is the omnipresence of the Soul.

AD: Substitute ‘I-Am’ for All. Here ‘Beings’ are individual I-Ams. Your I-Am is Authentic Being and is therefore universal.

This unit of life called ‘I-Am’ is a seamless whole, apprehending the intelligence in the same manner; you can’t cut a piece off.

Your I-Am is Being and therefore place is within it--it’s not within a place.

Life or Soul itself is the ultimate organ of perception, and perceives the Ideas. This unit of Life is your life. Your Life is the organ by which the manifestation of the Ideas takes place. It is the apprehending organ by which it [Intelligence/Idea] is grasped and manifesting into a universe.

Plotinus says insofar as my life is a unit, it cannot be taken apart--either it is the whole or nothing. The whole depends on the body which is used for a vehicle. But the whole of manifestation is within your life.

Plotinus speaks of “unit Soul” in the very beginning (as an authentic existent).

VI.4.1: “...body will meet Soul awaiting it everywhere; ... the entire material mass of the universe has been set into an existent Soul.”

We can go one step further. Plotinus points out the One is present in each in [and] every one totally.

If all pervasive the ‘Unit of Life’ is not quantitative--there is no boundary on it--for the intellect to grasp, it is self-defeating, because the intellect can only distinguish.

“To speak generally . . . what we call distribution is simply omnipresence.”

Plotinus VI.4.2: “Side by side exist the Authentic All and its counterpart, the visible universe. The Authentic is contained in nothing, since nothing existed before it; of necessity anything coming after it must, as a first condition of existence, be contained by this All, especially since it depends upon the Authentic and without that could have neither stability nor movement.

“We may be reminded that the universe cannot be contained in the Authentic as in a place, where place would mean the boundaries of some surrounding extension considered as an envelope, or some space formerly a part of the Void and still remaining unoccupied even after the emergence of the universe, that it can only support itself, as it were, upon the Authentic and rest in the embrace of its omnipresence; but this objection is merely verbal and will disappear if our meaning is grasped; we mention it for another purpose; it goes to enforce our real assertion, that the Authentic All, at once primal and veritable, needs no place and is in no way contained. The All, as being an integral, cannot fall short of itself; it must ever have fulfilled its own totality, ever reached to its own equivalence; as far as the sum of entities extends, there this is; for this is the All.

“Inevitably, also, anything other than this All that may be stationed therein must have part in the All, merge into it, and hold by its strength; it is not that the thing detaches a portion of the All but that

within itself it finds the All which has entered into it while still unbrokenly self-abiding, since Being cannot lodge in non-Being, but, if anything, non-Being within Being.

“Being, then, is present to all Being; an identity cannot tear itself asunder; the omnipresence asserted of it must be presence within the realm of Being; that is, it must be a self-presence. And it is in no way strange that the omnipresence should be at once self-abiding and universal; this is merely saying omnipresence within a unity.

“It is our way to limit Being to the sense-known and therefore to think of omnipresence in terms of the concrete; in our overestimate of the sensible, we question how that other Nature can reach over such vastness; but our great is small, and this, small to us, is great; it reaches integrally to every point of our universe--or, better, our universe, moving from every side and in all its members towards this, meets it everywhere as the omnipresent All ever stretching beyond.

“The universe in all its reach can attain nothing further--that would mean overpassing the total of Being--and therefore is content to circle about it; not able to encompass or even to fill the All, it is content to accept place and subordination, for thus it preserves itself in neighbouring the higher present to it--present and yet absent; self-holding, whatever may seek its presence.

“Wherever the body of the universe may touch, there it finds this All; it strives for no further advance, willing to revolve in that one circle, since to it that is the All and in that movement its every part embraces the All.

“If that higher were itself in place there would be the need of seeking that precise place by a certain right path; part of seeker must touch part of sought, and there would be far and near. But since there is no far and near there must be, if presence at all, presence entire. And presence there indubitably is; this highest is present to every being of those that, free of far and near, are of power to receive.”

AD would paraphrase VI.4.2 as “the whole of the entire universe is within the Soul.”

Any place you point to, Soul is totally present. Omnipresent is understood in the way that it is totally present at each and every point. So in that sense you can get to Bombay very quickly.

As far as the constant for the speed of light--“c”-- is concerned, the only thing constant about [it] is that it’s fixed in your brain.

Further commentary on VI.4.2: The I-Am is contained in nothing and nothing existed before that I-Am.

The universe depends on the I-Am for it to exist -- without it there would be neither stability nor motion (as genera of the authentic existent I-Am).

When the I-Am manifests something, then something exists. The first Three Hypostases don’t exist.

The universe, if it exists in the Soul, and the Soul is not kind of thing, then the universe can’t exist in a place.

The ‘All’ is the I-Am, ‘all things’ is the manifested world, so the manifested world is non-Being. Because the World-Idea is in the process of becoming, it is non-Being, but that is within Being.

Non-Being is the substratum of the Ideas (see the tractate on Time and Eternity).

“Being ... is present to all Being” -- that is, the mind is the spectator and mirror of Being, or the I-Am is the mirror of Being.

The I-Am is an autonomous principle; it is an inherent freedom. Or, in Eckhart's words--"God couldn't create anything greater, if He could have, he would have done so." -- Here God is Absolute Soul, Soul in the Nous.

Plotinus is speaking of the way the World-Idea comes into the Soul--the Soul receives the World-Idea and translates it. Here is a bit of detail, on how the World-Idea comes into the Soul itself: that World-Idea is not the one [the world] we see, the World-Idea's fabrication of the world by the Gods is given by the Cosmic Soul.

The World-Idea cannot rise above the Soul, can't go beyond Soul, because then it wouldn't be the World-Idea, but one of the Reals, one of the Hypostases.

Speaking of the 10th and 11th house ideas, the 10th and 11th house gods fabricate the bodies manifested by the Individual Soul, by their Asmita principle; one can't go beyond that.

How does the intruder foist itself on the Soul? [cf: VI.4.14-15] Think of the individual samskaras of God, organized by the individual reason-principles into various prakritis with their function. They become the functioning or the base on which the Asmita of the Cosmic Soul manifests it. The ultimate substratum of our body is these prakritis (samskaras of God organized by Universal and Cosmic Soul). Then we can understand what is meant by "that MAN foists himself upon the Soul." The samskaras of Gods foists itself on the Soul--the prakritis are these samskaras.

[This is like the analogy that] Your mind has many dreams--each dream leaves behind traces of its presence--a cumulative point when these traces are etched in the fabric of your mind is the next dream. These traces have a life of their own, a subterranean life, which seeks to rise and grasp the life of the Soul for its own.

The following can sometimes be experienced in certain contemplative states [using the cinema film analogy]: One still is life, your life -- your life is presenting the picture, and that presentation can't be taken apart. When you recognize that the whole presentation is your life, everything you perceive is a living thing, is made of the very stuff of life itself. -- So the world is a living world, everything in it is living. If you life is a medium, it's a whole, this you can only intuitively feel.

Souls don't exclude one another. There is no spatial demarcation between one Soul and another. So the light of stars going into another solar system is that the Asmita principle of our solar system includes the Asmita principle of other solar systems and vice versa; there is no spatial discrimination or demarcation (in the Soul).

Aside comment by AD: Plotinus was guarded in his remarks because of the Mystery Schools. Plotinus talked down the body because his was a time when the value of the body was exaggerated--he puts the notion of the body in its proper place.

Two other comments:

"Attention indicates the Soul's presence."

"The importance of 'philosophy as wonder'."

[JF Notes End]